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Viewing cable 06BUENOSAIRE903, ARGENTINA NAMES STRONG CHAVEZ ALLY AS AMBASSADOR

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#06BUENOSAIRE903.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BUENOSAIRE903	2006-04-21 19:15	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Buenos Aires

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1361157-la-relacion-con-chavez-al-desnudo>

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBU #0903/01 1111915
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 211915Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4241
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 5482
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 1333
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 5286
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0893
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR LIMA 1821
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 5080
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5488
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0723
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000903

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2016

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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA NAMES STRONG CHAVEZ ALLY AS AMBASSADOR
TO VENEZUELA

REF: 05 STATE 1049

Classified By: Ambassador Lino Gutierrez, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOA announced April 18 that it was seeking acceptance from the Government of Venezuela to name former airline stewardess, union leader, congresswoman, and Chavez ally Alicia Castro as the new Argentine Ambassador to Venezuela. Castro, 56, is known as one of Chavez's most ardent supporters in Argentina, and was a main force behind the "anti-Summit" last November in Mar del Plata. Her appointment comes at a time when Argentine-Venezuelan relations were beginning to cool, and may represent an attempt by President Kirchner to please both Chavez and the Argentine left. We believe Castro will continue to advocate that Kirchner pursue a closer relationship with Chavez rather than act as a moderating influence. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) First elected to Congress in 1997, Castro was reelected in 2001 and recently vacated her seat in December ¶2005. From 1991-2004 she also led the union that represents Argentine flight attendants and pursers and still holds a high-ranking position within the union. She worked as a stewardess for Aerolineas Argentinas from 1969-1990. Unmarried, Castro currently lives in Buenos Aires with her 18-year old daughter.

¶3. (C) Castro is an unflinching supporter of Chavez and his policies (see reftel). In 2004, Castro sponsored four pro-Chavez resolutions in the Argentine Congress. Last year Castro called herself "Chavez's vanguard in this country," and lauded Chavez's economic policies for their "humanism and better distribution of incomes." (Rumors have swirled that there is also a romantic relationship between the two.) Castro also said that "Bush is the real threat," and weapons purchased by Venezuela from Spain "are part of a strategic defense." In November 2005 she was one of the main speakers

at the anti-American "'People's Summit'" (at which Chavez also delivered a 2-hour speech) that was held simultaneously with the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata. She also sent a letter to President Bush several weeks before the Summit asking him not to travel to Argentina because he represented "'a danger to the democracies of South America.'"

14. (C) Kirchner,s decision comes at a time when relations between Argentina and Venezuela had appeared to be cooling. Kirchner had canceled a scheduled mini-Summit with Lula and Chavez to be held in Mendoza after Bachelet,s inauguration to discuss the Venezuela-Brazil-Argentina gas pipeline project. Kirchner had said at the time that not enough progress had been made in developing a serious project proposal worthy of discussion by the heads of state.

15. (C) Kirchner has also remained concerned about Chavez,s increasingly successful seduction of Morales, which he views as meddling in Argentina,s backyard. (Note: Morales is playing tough with the Argentines on the gas issue and the Bolivia-Uruguay-Paraguay mini-Summit in Asuncion has Chavez,s overt support.)

16. (C) In addition, Argentina and Venezuela have been involved in a spat related to Venezuelan sales of fuel oil to Argentina in 2004. The Venezuelan oil parastatal, PDVSA, wants Argentina to pay nearly \$20 million in shipping/port costs when PDVSA vessels had to wait several months to unload. Argentina argues that the sales contract did not cover such a situation and refuses to pay. Finally, Argentina,s recent lead role in blocking Venezuelan antics at the recent CICTE meeting in Bogot brought tensions to a head.

17. (C) COMMENT: From our point of view, the timing of Castro,s appointment couldn't be worse, particularly in the wake of Argentina,s position on Venezuela at the UNSC. However, Chavez has not been invited back to Buenos Aires since the Summit, and some believe that Kirchner may be

outsourcing his Venezuela policy to Alicia in Caracas, while he tries to put some distance between himself and Chavez. There is also an emerging rift among Kirchner,s advisors between Planning Minister De Vido, who wants to avoid ideology and keep the Venezuelan relationship strictly to business, and the Bolivarian minority within the Peronist movement headed by Alicia Castro. De Vido told us in a meeting a couple of months ago that Kirchner would gladly meet with Venezuelan opposition leaders here in Buenos Aires, and noted that no requests had come in two years. The Venezuelan opposition should take him up on this and try to deflate some of the public momentum that Chavez won with Castro,s appointment.

18. (U) Reftel available at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/buenosaires.< /a>>

GUTIERREZ

=====CABLE ENDS=====

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